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ABSTRACT

By offering educational programs to large numbers of citizens, public higher education creates multiple social and economic benefits for a state and its people. Beyond overseeing these programs, however, boards have an obligation to ensure that state institutions address their state's economic development needs. The question is whether institutions should go beyond this basic agenda to address other social issues that affect learning and living well. This booklet addresses the issues involved in developing and implementing a public agenda for economic and social well-being. In most states, public institutions of higher education have the opportunity to use circumstance and leadership to improve the lot of the state's people. In states in which the public agenda works, it is usually predicated on particular aspects, including political leadership, vision, well-designed initiatives effective governance, financial resources, and aggressive public campaigns. The experiences of four states in which the public agenda has been effectively designed and executed are described. These states--Illinois, Kentucky, Oregon, and Texas--provide lessons for other state institutions as they pursue a public agenda. Some next steps are outlined in the pursuit a public agenda for well-being in the state and the United States as a whole. Ten resources for further reading are described. (SLD)

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Pursuing the public's agenda

Trustees in partnership with state leaders

By Terrence J. MacTaggart and James R. Mingle

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Dear colleagues:

Letter from the President of the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges

The ***Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges*** *is dedicated to strengthening the performance of citizen boards of public and independent higher education, and the institution of citizen trusteeship that distinguishes American colleges and universities from those in most other nations.*

AGB comprises some 1,200 boards that hold policymaking responsibility for more than 1,800 colleges, universities, and other educational organizations. Our members include boards of four-year and two-year public and independent colleges and universities, professional schools, seminaries and theological schools; boards of separately incorporated foundations affiliated with public colleges and universities; boards of statewide higher education coordination and planning agencies; advisory boards of institutions or campuses within multicampus systems; and several governing boards of prominent independent K-12 schools.

AGB directly serves 35,000 individuals—board members, presidents, and senior executives—and, indirectly, thousands of others. As a continuing-education resource for trustees and boards, and as a contributor to effective working relationships between boards and chief executives, AGB seeks to strengthen the trusteeship and governance of higher education.

The AGB ***Center for Public Higher Education Trusteeship and Governance*** *promotes improved communication among leaders in higher education and state government, as well as among others working to make higher education governance more efficient, effective, collaborative, and accountable. This paper exemplifies the Center's mission of facilitating policy dialogues among trustees, university executives, policymakers, and business leaders in order to forge a shared public agenda for higher education. Although its focus is on state systems, the paper offers lessons*

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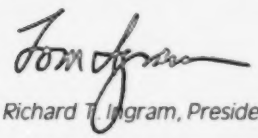
for any institution of higher learning that wishes to be an integral part of its state's social and economic agenda.

The Center works closely with states to shape their own public agenda for higher education. Most recently, in Mississippi, the Center assisted a 40-member steering committee of political, education, and business leaders in crafting the state's public agenda for higher education. With the Center serving as a facilitator, the steering committee met several times, culminating in a statewide leadership summit in January 2002, when the state plan titled ***Building Opportunity in Mississippi through Higher Education*** *was released.*

AGB deeply appreciates the generous support of foundations and individual donors who make the Center's work possible. ***Pursuing the Public's Agenda*** *benefited especially from the assistance of the Houston Endowment, Inc., the Lumina Foundation for Education, and the Atlantic Philanthropies. We are also grateful to our colleagues Terry MacTaggart and Jim Mingle for their superb work. We join with them in urging thoughtful consideration of how the ideas in this paper can be applied in your state or institution.*



Richard T. Ingram, President
Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges

September 2002

Contents

Pursuing the public's agenda **1**

Organizing for and sustaining success **9**

Lessons learned **17**

Illinois: Be consistent 19

Kentucky: Be bold 23

Oregon: Be creative 27

Texas: Be inclusive 31

What to do **35**

Further reading *39*

Acknowledgments *40*

About the authors *41*

AGB publications, programs, and services *42*

Pursuing the public's agenda

What does the public have a right to expect from the trustees of its public colleges, universities and systems?

Most people would agree that good stewardship of the public's resources is a top priority. Providing quality education and a safe learning environment for students, ensuring adequate compensation for faculty, safeguarding academic freedom, and hiring, supporting and occasionally firing presidents are also traditional parts of a trustee's job description. Effective boards also nurture their own members, seek to practice the art of trusteeship, and generally subscribe to the responsibilities and principles of good practice developed by AGB.

Certainly, by offering solid educational programs to large numbers of citizens, public higher education creates multiple social and economic benefits for a state and its people. Beyond overseeing those programs, however, boards have an obligation to ensure that state institutions address their state's economic development needs.

But should institutions go beyond that basic educational and economic development agenda to address other social issues that affect learning and living well? Economic stagnation and poverty, for example, or the condition of children, school reform, health-care inequities, literacy rates, and inadequate housing? If so, how?

Should institutions go beyond the basic educational and economic development agenda to address other social issues? If so, how?

Many trustees are uncertain of both their authority over their institutions and their responsibility to society. The broad devolution of governance authority, from state to local boards and systems, and from an executive office to the campuses, magnifies that sense of ambiguity. And expanded *individual* benefits accruing from education seem to have obscured the broader *social* benefits. Activists of a conservative bent argue that trustees would best serve society by leading a return to traditional academic values and curricula. Others hold that academia needs to get beyond its walls to address all issues that affect the quality of life for every member of society.

A public agenda uses communication, teaching, research, and partnerships to promote the common weal.

In light of those disparate attitudes, many educational leaders, trustees, and executives struggle to serve a public purpose beyond managing their institutions in an increasingly competitive market. Few institutions have a broad mission to address all issues of a public agenda.

But collectively, institutions under the guidance of a university system or coordinating board with a statewide perspective—and with the necessary and critical input of business, government, and civic leaders—can focus educational programs and activities to address economic and social issues through a distinctive public agenda for higher education.

Such an agenda uses communication, teaching, research, and partnerships to promote the common weal of a state and its citizens. The task is difficult, of course, given limited resources and inherent risks, but many boards are tackling it successfully. Those boards:

- Extend their traditional and essential mandates for overseeing responsible management of their institutions and systems to develop and implement a larger set of objectives centered on improving the condition of their state and its citizens.
- Accept their responsibility *as boards* to assert leadership in directing the institutions they oversee to improve the condition of citizens and taxpayers.
- Place the educational, economic, and social needs of the larger society first, above the priorities of higher education institutions.
- Emphasize collaboration with other state leaders and organizations in pursuit of a collective social agenda.
- Change educational and research priorities within the academy, if necessary, to address critical state needs.

- Rectify market shortcomings by identifying and addressing specific problems, such as low college-participation rates, an underprepared workforce, rural underdevelopment, inadequately prepared teachers, and adult illiteracy.

- Depending on mission, location and the wishes of citizens, pursue a broader social agenda that includes actions to improve the condition of children, and to address crime, poverty, inadequate schooling, health care, the environment, and housing issues.

- Engage in political—not partisan—advocacy for specific policy initiatives, as well as for funding to support their public agenda.

Three agendas—one board

As it successfully develops policies, a board pursues three agendas simultaneously. And as it does so, its members must keep in mind the importance of strong executive leadership that is free to be separate from state government yet accountable to it, and the academic, economic, and social purposes of higher education.

"A university exists to serve the people."

One of the most important responsibilities of board members is that of nurturing, preserving, and protecting institutions under their care. That **institution-first agenda** carries with it a host of corollary responsibilities—gathering new resources and enhancing academic prestige, for example. The motto of the institution-first agenda is: "A great university makes a great state."

The **administrative agenda**, the details of which are outlined in state statutes and regulations, is also important. At the state or system level those will involve oversight and coordination of planning, efficiency, and accountability. Advocates of an administrative agenda often say, "Let's run this system like a business, encouraging greater productivity and entrepreneurism."

The third agenda, and the focus of this paper, is the **public agenda**. Its elements tend to be less defined but no less important. Advocates of implementing a public agenda focus on the broader social benefits of higher education and less on the individual ones. They aim to to put consumers—students, employers, citizens, and taxpayers—first and institutional interests second. In other words: "A university exists to serve the people."

A public agenda for the future

Addressing a public agenda may require radically new institutional approaches.

In many ways, higher education has been extraordinarily responsive to its changing environment. In response to the industrial revolution of the 19th century, it radically shifted from a classical curriculum to a practical one. And following World War II, it not only opened its doors to returning GIs, it also greatly expanded its research capacity to address national needs such as defense and public health. In the 1960s, higher education was integral to the fight for civil rights for all citizens, as well as a—sometimes-reluctant—player in the political unrest surrounding the Vietnam war.

Given that history, trying to predict a public agenda for higher education is nothing more than gazing into a crystal ball. Events and situations have a way of surprising and shocking us with new challenges. We are still grappling, for example, with the implications of September 11 for our public responsibilities. Also, we are likely to face significant biomedical and environmental dilemmas in the years ahead—and no doubt many others we cannot foresee.

Not all such important issues will find their way to the public agendas of individual states, but they will be elements of our decision-making. In the main, however, boards quite likely will center their public agenda primarily around four objectives:

- Extending and sustaining prosperity to all of a state's citizens.
- Expanding education systems to provide universal access to postsecondary education and lifelong learning.
- Assuming more responsibility for improving the quality of life in the states and locales where institutions exist.
- Partnering with other social and educational organizations to achieve collaborative goals.

None of these is new—but all may require radically new approaches.

Extending prosperity

The forces of competition, and now the responsibilities of global leadership, have forced enormous challenges on our economic and social institutions—challenges that the nation, for the most part, has met. Worker productivity has grown, and American colleges and universities have fostered entirely new industries. The

Internet, for example, which is responsible for much of our recent economic growth, began as a partnership between a handful of universities and the Department of Defense. Many of the nation's leaders in the information technology revolution began their work in the classrooms and labs of American colleges. The same can be said of the biotechnology area, which holds much promise in curing disease and increasing food production.

At the same time, the forces of worldwide competition have washed over the states and forced them to make economic development and the pursuit of more and better jobs their top priorities. In part that is because states still face compelling social challenges. For example, one fifth of American children live in homes below the poverty line—the worst record in the developed world. And for many Americans without college degrees, family life has suffered as parents work longer hours to maintain a reasonable standard of living. Some workers feel the adverse effects of the new economy—precarious employment, export of their jobs, reduced benefits, and higher health-care costs—without reaping its benefits. In nearly all states, large areas and significant population groups are untouched by prosperity—they have, in fact, seen a decline in their current status and their outlook for the future.

"When the economy works, everything works."

Over the past 20 years, many enterprising trustees, academic executives, and state political leaders have advocated a public agenda that equates improved higher education with expanded economic opportunity. "When the economy works, everything works," as one governor put it. Proponents of such efforts believe that raising per-capita and family incomes through advanced education and better jobs will do more good sooner than will any other state initiatives.

And in some states and regions, university clusters have provided the impetus and assets for explosions of knowledge industries: North Carolina's Research Triangle Park, for example, the economic growth on Route 128 in Massachusetts, or the boom in the city-states of the West. Governors of every state dream of creating their own Silicon valley, highway, or forest. Entrepreneurial university leaders, especially those of schools with expertise in science and technology, see great potential in contributing to that ideal. And businesses of all kinds are eager to take part as well.

Those common goals provide opportunities for academic, political, and business leaders to fashion a revised set of goals for higher education and its governing boards. It is scarcely an exaggeration to say that every public institution in the country, from modest community colleges to the most prestigious research universities, has professed economic development as a part of its mission. The states discussed in this study, however, have attempted to turn those visions into policies. They have struggled

to incorporate economic and employment goals into their agendas, to set new standards for the roles of public institutions.

Promoting universal access and lifelong learning

Lifelong learning and worker retraining have become public mandates.

For much of the post-World War II period in America, expanding access has been the primary goal of public policy in higher education. With few exceptions, each decade since the 1940s has seen new programs and goals for including greater numbers of students in postsecondary education.

The first decade of the 21st century is following that pattern, as we see the negative economic consequences of anything less than universal access. Not only do we expect young people to pursue education beyond high school, we are stretching our systems to accommodate the increasing number of adults who need advanced training to obtain or keep jobs in our dynamic and mobile society.

Lifelong learning and worker retraining have become public mandates. And technology has aided our quest for universal access immeasurably. Distance learning allows citizens far from universities to take advantage of high-quality, interactive educational programs, while at the same time reducing the need for physical infrastructure.

Improving quality of life

In the stampede to make programs and courses relevant to the economic well-being of our citizens, it is easy to forget the longer-term benefits of education—better health, better parenting, more civic engagement, and most important, a greater sense of individual control over one's life.

It is also easy to forget our social obligations. Our institutions are rich in both material and intellectual resources that can and should be extended to the community at large. Professors in most states earn about twice the average income of the taxpayers who pay their salaries. A typical state university president makes five times as much as his or her fellow citizens. And universities themselves—both public and private—receive special tax status and enormous amounts of public dollars. Those alone form an implicit contract wherein a taxpayer says, "I'll make an investment in you and your institution with the understanding that your work will ultimately lead to a better life for me and my family."

As both national and state governments limit their roles in providing for the material welfare of poorer and less able citizens, and the ebbs and flows of the economy spread resources imperfectly, there is a need for other entities to address unresolved social problems. With their brainpower and goodwill, colleges and universities ought to fill that role.

With their brainpower and goodwill, colleges and universities ought to address unresolved social problems.

Furthermore, if colleges and universities must serve values as utilitarian as economic development, they must be repositories and sustainers of a higher culture as well. They should provide essential social criticism, holding us to our highest and most noble instincts.

Finally, in setting priorities and spending policies, boards should not forget that many colleges and universities serve both their enrolled students and their wider communities. A community college or small university or private college may, in fact, be the *only* cultural institution in its area—the glue that holds that community together and provides meaning to the lives of its citizens. A state has as much a responsibility to sustain such a cultural institution as it does to provide workers for the technology industry.

Acting as a community partner

Pursuit of a public agenda represents not so much *unilateral* action as it does *cooperative* action. Too often in the past, when higher education reached out to the community, it did so with the attitude that "you have a problem and we have the solution." That thinking particularly hindered relationships with the elementary and secondary schools that should be higher education's primary constituency. It also affected partnerships with business leaders, who were often not consulted about their needs and concerns.

As shown in the case studies in Part III of this paper, however, higher education is now doing a much better job working with school communities to improve the preparation of students, and to better inform them and their parents about postsecondary opportunities. Many states now have marshalled the talents of educators from preschool through elementary, secondary, and postsecondary education in P-16 councils that forge policies and programs of early intervention, curriculum standards, and teacher preparation. In addition, the cases demonstrate that business, education, and community partnerships are increasing and becoming extremely valuable to a public agenda.

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Organizing for and sustaining success

In this section, we try to answer a fundamental question: Why are some states more effective than others at harnessing the power of their higher education assets to serve the public's agenda?

It is true that some states are blessed with abundant resources, good climate, and strategic location. Other states invest comparatively little in education but because of a pleasing environment, they attract a continuing stream of educated individuals to fuel their economy. Still others, despite enlightened leadership, are destined to strive in vain to the reach the top of any national ranking.

Most states, however, despite any shortcomings, do have the opportunity to use circumstance and leadership to significantly improve their lot. And when a public agenda works, it is usually predicated on one or more of the elements that follow here.

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Political leadership

An aggressive public agenda for higher education is often led by a governor, one who has made education a top policy priority, who is adroit enough to translate campaign rhetoric into legislative and budgetary reality, and who is lucky enough to persevere for at least two terms. In our cases, Paul Patton of Kentucky, and, in a quieter way, James Thompson and Jim Edgar of Illinois, stand out. Patton, an engineer by training who identified deeply with the plight of people in the eastern Appalachia part of his state, showed extraordinary commitment in the face of substantial political risk when he based his policies on long-term education reform, not quick fixes.

While we did not specifically study Georgia, Zell Miller, governor from 1991 to 1999, also epitomizes the modern "education governor." Other southern governors—Richard Riley of South Carolina and Lamar Alexander of Tennessee, among them—are models of state leaders who used education as a tool to transform their state economies. But Miller deserves credit as the champion of higher education in pursuit of the public good. His justly famous and well-named Hope Scholarship, which offers a free public college education to every high school student with a B average, has become nationally recognized for its simplicity, boldness, and range. Variations now exist throughout the country, including the Texas Grant Program.

If education is not a governor's priority, then others must act.

But what if education is not a governor's priority? If a governor chooses to push for other state concerns, or lacks a reliable political base, then others must act: the higher education community itself, for example, or a coalition of business, community and educational leaders that persuades legislators of the economic benefits of investing in higher education. A combination of business leaders, deans, presidents, and a strong system staff accomplished much in Oregon, even in the absence of a gubernatorial charge. In Illinois, leadership has come from a variety of quarters—board chairs with close relationships to the governor, effective staff leadership, and outstanding presidents. In North Dakota, a coalition of legislators and higher education leaders guided the way through a roundtable process that achieved statewide consensus. In Mississippi, with the catalytic assistance of the AGB Center for Public Higher Education Trusteeship and Governance, a broad-based steering committee of political, education, and business leaders met several times in 2001, culminating in a leadership summit to craft the state's public agenda for higher education, *Building Opportunity in Mississippi through Higher Education*.

Vision

"Vision" is often derided as mushiness. But Gov. Rudy Perpich of Minnesota was one of the first to prove that an inspirational ideal clearly communicated is essential to winning public support for higher education. Having grown up and worked in the Iron Range, he had witnessed firsthand the decline in resource-based industries, when employment plummeted as deep as the state's taconite mines. In his terms (1976-79 and 1983-91) he championed the ideal of Minnesota as "the Brain Power State" and asked Elmer Anderson, a former governor and a successful businessman, to lead a commission to recommend policies to deliver on the potential of higher education. As a consequence of their shared vision of broadly accessible, affordable higher education, Minnesota may have overbuilt its institutions and systems (a situation now largely corrected), but it enjoys an extraordinarily high level of educational attainment and a very strong economy.

The most effective statements of a vision take a populist tone that speaks to the hopes and fears of a range of citizens. Patton asked Kentuckians to invest today so their children would have a better life in 2020. He put the relationship between education and economic well-being in the simplest terms: education pays.

Well-designed initiatives

States need a shared vision—

and "good ideas that work."

In states that pursue a successful public agenda, well-designed initiatives translate a vision into specific projects that legislatures can fund and that state colleges and universities can implement. As one observer stated, states need "good ideas that work."

And sometimes those good ideas are not the most obvious. That higher education should take responsibility for adult literacy efforts in Kentucky may not have been readily apparent, but it was essential to achieving the commonwealth's ambitious college participation goals. "Bucks for Brains," a matching grant program that fostered substantial government and private commitment in Kentucky, is another good idea that worked. The Illinois Great Cities initiative showed that state's commitment to the Chicago public schools, and put the University of Illinois at Chicago at the center of the successful governance reform. Texas expanded Georgia's Hope Scholarship idea by linking eligibility to a challenging high-school curriculum, not grades.

Effective governance structures

Effective public-university governance structures exhibit several consistent and common traits. They foster close ties between a governor's office and a state or system board, but ensure enough distance so that the university or system does not become a state agency. To deliver for the people of their states, trustees must believe that a public agenda, however defined, is more important than academic self-interest. Board members also should display unqualified support for their executives in carrying out its visions—most especially in public.

The right governance mix? A judicious balance between campus autonomy and central control.

Whether leadership comes from a governing or coordinating board is less important than other factors. In three of the cases studied—Texas, Kentucky and Illinois—strong coordinating boards are coupled with local institutional boards. Oregon's governing system places its chancellor in charge of both the overall organization and campus presidents. But that system encourages a great deal of campus independence, and the presidents play a prominent role in systemwide decisionmaking. A judicious balance between campus autonomy that encourages creative leadership and entrepreneurship on the one hand, and some central control—especially of the political agenda and overall budget—on the other seems to be the right combination.

It is tempting to assert that capable leaders with good working relationships and shared goals can operate successfully within any structure. Sometimes, however, governance systems require significant reform. Paul Patton felt that as long as Kentucky's community colleges were run by the University of Kentucky, they would not be effective at workforce training, or able to meet other practical needs. He prevailed in a high-stakes battle with the university to create an independent community and technical college system more aligned with the state's economic aspirations.

"Flexibility with accountability"—to use the phrase that directed recent governance changes in North Dakota—has been the theme of several recent reorganizations, including those in Illinois and Oregon.

Sometimes, new, less-formal structures are necessary to advancing a state agenda. Those P-16 councils, for example, can foster greater communication and collective action on a variety of school and higher education partnership issues—from standards and curriculum to teaching. While developing its public agenda, Mississippi determined that much better communication resulted when board leaders and executives from the state school board, state community college board, and university system met on a regular basis.

State higher education leaders are appropriately wary of structural change. Anyone who has led—or been the victim of—organizational restructuring knows that change comes hard, that all other agendas are put on hold while turf wars rage, and that failing to actually make change will jeopardize reform, not to mention careers. But sometimes, reform requires realigning authority and responsibility. When that is the case, as it was in Kentucky and continues to be in several other states, boards will need to bring about changes as quickly as possible so as to get on with the real work of serving the public's purposes.

Sometimes reform requires realigning authority and responsibility.

In considering the advantages and disadvantages of reorganization, policymakers must ask themselves some fundamental questions:

- Will a policy alignment more effectively facilitate their pursuit of a public agenda?
- Will new structures result in more efficient reporting relationships, increased accountability and entrepreneurship, or new resources?
- Will the costs in political conflict and disruption be worth the projected benefits?
- Do we have the leadership and tenacity succeed?

New financial resources

It takes money to start and sustain a public agenda—often in sizeable amounts. Kentucky, for example, increased its postsecondary funding by approximately 8.1 percent per year from 1996 through 2001. In Texas the legislature increased funding for the biennium beginning in September 2001 by more than $1.2 billion, or 13.3 percent. Among the cases only Oregon managed its initiatives with modest increases. The states in this study were fortunate to have new sources to tap: lottery funds, increased sales taxes, tuition hikes, tobacco settlement money, and most important, the revenue generated by the economic boom of the 1990s.

Some governors make the case that institutions should redirect their own resources to a public agenda. But because of the high fixed-costs of physical plants and tenured faculty, that is not a practical solution in the short term. Nonetheless, it is fair to expect that universities could, for instance, redirect money freed-up from retirements to new hires in fields directly tied to state priorities. Illinois, for example, documented substantial reallocation during its reorganization of its higher education system.

The quantity of investment is important—but so are its targets.

The quantity of investment is important—but so are its targets. New public resources need to be separate from baseline budgets so that their use is transparent, especially during times of financial crisis. When states are strapped for cash, it is tempting to sacrifice a public agenda to more immediate needs. That is a mistake: limiting enrollment or cutting back services to a state are not acceptable responses to monetary pressures. Kentucky's reform movement met that challenge by establishing "trust funds" earmarked for specific state purposes, such as enrollment increases, rural economic development, and technology transfer. Such actions allow citizens to see—and understand—the importance of higher education to their state.

In fact, adversity can be an ally of reform efforts. It provides an opportunity to prune less-important programs, and for a restructuring that will render organizations leaner and more efficient. To take advantage of such potential, however, a board will need to renew its commitment to a public agenda, not merely to muddle through until times improve.

Aggressive public campaigns

Systems and major universities with statewide missions possess extraordinary potential for shaping public and political opinion in their favor, though they are just beginning to realize and act on that capacity.

With very few exceptions, Americans in every state now realize that postsecondary education is the best way to obtain a good job and a high standard of living. Systems and coordinating boards with the authority to fashion a unified program of action and with the creativity to craft and communicate a powerful message have a good chance of prevailing in the court of public opinion, especially if their vision for higher education becomes the political agenda for their states. In such cases, higher education leaders can go directly to the public to build support for better funding from legislatures, for votes in a capital bonding referendum, or to secure—or oppose—a policy change requiring voter approval.

Campaigns to pass referenda or to sell a legislative package do not end with a vote or adjournment, of course. Public communication is a proactive, continuous effort that cannot be allowed to languish or grow stale. Neither are such campaigns the work of only a public information office. They are one of the three or four chief responsibilities of executives and board leaders. (See "Engaging the Public," facing page, for characteristics of an effective campaign.)

Engaging the public

- ☐ Listen to the voices of the your state's communities, workplaces, schools, and public forums of all types.
- ☐ Construct a positive agenda for action, one that includes compelling initiatives that have clear, readily communicated goals.
- ☐ Develop genuine partnerships with the business community and community-based organizations in support of your initiatives.
- ☐ Design and implement a grass-roots communications campaign that engages all members of the university.
- ☐ Encourage university leaders to be frequent, articulate, passionate spokespersons for your public agenda.
- ☐ Carry your campaign continuously to the entire state.

Persuading policymakers and the public to support a public agenda for higher education is, of course, much easier in good economic times than bad. Funding K-12 schools, along with Medicaid and other initiatives, often take precedence over higher education. And governors and legislators do realize that tuition hikes can make up for at least some of the lost state revenue.

But if higher education leaders wish to keep their public agenda at the forefront of their state's consciousness, they must resist pressure to eliminate their outreach efforts—and they must avoid three common mistakes.

To keep their public agenda on the front burner, higher education leaders must avoid three common mistakes.

- ☐ **Don't let program reductions or tuition hikes reduce attention to the long-term benefits of your public agenda.** Continue to advocate its principles and benefits at every opportunity.
- ☐ **Don't let the news media or public interest groups control bad news.** Decision makers should present any adverse situations, not surrender that responsibility to those who might exaggerate their effects.

- **Don't blame your governor or legislature.** Laws require them to balance budgets. Advocate for access, affordability, and quality in higher education, but don't personalize the debate.

Executives and trustees who follow those principles will—at the very least—position their institutions and their causes to good advantage when the inevitable economic upswing occurs.

Lessons learned

This section focuses on the states of Illinois, Oregon, and Texas, and the Commonwealth of Kentucky. Each offers a different lesson on designing and executing a public agenda.

***Illinois,** a large, affluent state with a diversified economy, has successfully deployed its resources over a 30-year span to continuously expand educational and economic opportunity. In recent years, under the leadership of the Illinois Board of Higher Education, it has developed a clearly defined public agenda.*

***Kentucky,** by contrast, is playing catch-up, attempting to develop a knowledge-based economy and a higher standard of living for its people through strategic investments in its research universities and community colleges. Under the leadership of a committed "education governor," Kentucky implemented a comprehensive and successful reform package in a very short time.*

***Oregon,** as its traditional forest products industry declined, found that its attractive environment, proximity to California, and homegrown electronics industry led to the rapid growth of a "silicon forest" radiating from Portland. Its challenge has been to sustain that growth by using higher education to extend economic benefits to low-income regions of the state, and to accomplish that expansion with few additional resources and limited political support.*

*The case of **Texas** represents the growing states of the South and West that face dramatic changes in their demographics. The already strong higher education system in Texas will have to become even more inclusive to meet the challenges ahead. The state's "Closing the Gaps by 2015" campaign represents an ambitious access agenda and partnership program with the public schools.*

Illinois: Be consistent

Illinois' economic strength is reflected in its extraordinarily diverse higher education system. Given its first-rate community colleges and regional institutions, excellent private colleges and proprietary institutions, and its world-class research universities, the state can rightly claim one of the top spots in the nation's higher education hierarchy.

In fact, Illinois received the highest grades on first state report card developed by the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education. In preparing students for college, in enabling them to actually attend, and in maintaining affordability, Illinois received straight A's. It faltered only on completion rates (C+) and on the social benefits imputed to higher education (B). No other state matched Illinois' level of achievement, and even where it failed to equal the nation's top achievers, its record was above national averages.

Sustained leadership

How did Illinois achieve those impressive results? The answer lies in consistent leadership, a willingness to not merely announce politically attractive initiatives but to actually carry them out, an abiding commitment to policies ensuring access, and years of dedicated administrations. Since 1976, Illinois has had only three governors, each of whom made education a priority. All are Republicans who have worked well with the state's legislature, which is controlled by Democrats. Over the years, in the words of one higher education leader, "stability has built trust, and trust has built good policy."

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Illinois also had the good fortune to find the right higher educational leaders. David Pierce built a strong community college system, Stan Ikenberry led the University of Illinois, and Tom Layzell headed one of the state college systems. Richard Wagner served as executive director of the powerful Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) for 18 years. Keith Sanders, Illinois-born and bred but widely experienced in politics and higher education leadership outside the state, succeeded him in 1998. Art Quern and, later, Lt. Governor Robert Kustra, chaired the IBHE successfully.

Furthermore, the IBHE was one of the first statewide boards to design its agenda around important public goals. In the mid-1980s, it organized its staff and board

efforts to address such issues as affordability, minority student achievement, improved undergraduate education, workforce preparation, and economic development—well ahead of other states.

Realigned academic priorities and governance

During the 1990s, the IBHE implemented two very different but complementary initiatives designed to better align its higher education assets with the needs of the state. Those efforts illustrate the seriousness with which Illinois orients—and sometimes reorients—higher education to serve contemporary social and political demands.

The board's academic program review substantially reduced duplicative and low-quality programs, restoring public confidence.

In 1991, the board launched the Priorities, Quality and Productivity (PQP) initiative, designed to examine thoroughly all academic programs in the state for efficiency, productivity, quality, and need. The exercise led to a substantial reduction in duplicative and low-quality programs, which led to a restoration of public confidence in the management of higher education—an advantageous perception, particularly when funding is an issue. Under PQP, some 300 university-level programs and 335 community college programs were eliminated, scaled back or consolidated, resulting in nearly $400 million that could be devoted to higher priority initiatives. Indeed, as another part of PQP, colleges and universities initiated 100 new programs. Although the process was certainly not without pain, Illinois' political leaders did increase support for higher education in the 1990s at a rate approximately 26 percent higher than the national average.

In another effort, Illinois underwent a governance change in 1995, moving from a "system of systems" to a more decentralized model: two university systems were discontinued, and seven individual public campuses gained their own governing boards, while two multicampus systems—the University of Illinois and Southern Illinois University—continued to exist. Throughout the restructuring, the IBHE maintained its statewide coordinating role. That combination of flexibility for changing circumstances and constancy in statewide leadership has contributed greatly to making Illinois one of the nation's top achievers in higher education.

The citizens' agenda

If PQP took an introspective focus to restore public confidence, the Citizens' Agenda for Illinois Higher Education, endorsed by the IBHE in July 1998, focuses on the needs

and priorities of citizens. While remaining true to the discipline of PQP, reform efforts have shifted somewhat from internal regulation to a market-oriented approach to the public's agenda. Following a series of public meetings, focus groups, and polls, the IBHE proposed that public higher education have eight primary goals:

- ☐ Increasing the educational attainment of Illinois citizens
- ☐ Extending access to higher education
- ☐ Assuring affordability
- ☐ Enhancing access and success for underrepresented groups
- ☐ Improving the quality of education
- ☐ Enhancing responsiveness to students, employers, communities, and the state
- ☐ Strengthening school-college partnerships
- ☐ Improving productivity

To be sure, those goals have governed higher education in Illinois—and in other states as well—for decades, but implementation strategies set the state apart. The IBHE's action plan, "The Illinois Commitment," included a number of specific, quantitative benchmarks for certain goals.

For example, the goal of strengthening relationships with K-12 education included a benchmark of annually increasing the number of master teachers, from 36 in 1998 to 500 by 2002. At this writing, a committee of representatives from the state's public and private institutions is working with board staff to further refine state-level and common institutional indicators for future reports on results of "The Illinois Commitment." Institutions are also identifying several mission-specific performance indicators as part of their 2002 reports.

Many factors lead to victory, of course, but ultimately, says Sanders, "our success is embedded in the culture of the state. Like other states in the Midwest, there is a pretty monolithic view among the people that education is the route to the good life. There is great pride in our universities, and that has deep historical roots. It was Lincoln who signed the Morrill Act in 1865 which created the land-grant universities."

"Our success is embedded in the culture of the state."

Achieving the goals of "The Illinois Commitment" will take several years and require concerted and collaborative efforts. Yet buy-ins by institutional and system governing boards, as well as by institutional and system executives, have already provided four years of true progress toward reaching the eight goals.

Kentucky: Be bold

Unfortunately, many governance changes seem to be driven not by purpose, but by personality. When done right, however, structural reforms set the stage for aligning the states higher education resources with a broader public agenda. No state better exemplifies this than Kentucky, where higher education reform and pursuit of the public agenda became inseparable.

In a state that ranks 46th in the percentage of its population with a high school diploma, and 42nd in bachelor's degree attainment, and which has more than a million workers with substandard literacy skills, an awareness of education's value may have been important, but was hardly easy to sell. It took not only a new education vision but also a new economic philosophy for the state. Kentucky, like many poor states—per-capita income is 81 percent of the national average—had built its economic development strategies on tax incentives to attract new businesses. "The courage and wisdom of Governor Patton," according to Lee Todd, president of the University of Kentucky, economic advisor to the governor, business entrepreneur, and former member of the Council on Postsecondary Education, "was to recognize that an education investment strategy would be a long time in realizing benefits."

Kentucky's restructuring met considerable political opposition, but most observers see it as key to meeting the state's aggressive new enrollment goals.

Necessary reforms

Governor Patton realized that successfully implementing an investment strategy would require refocusing the efforts and performance of Kentucky's institutions of higher learning. By any set of benchmarks, his reforms improved higher education significantly and, thus, the quality of life in the entire commonwealth.

The governor's reform package, which the legislature approved in 1997, has invested heavily in making its two research universities nationally competitive. The legislation also created the Kentucky Community and Technical College System, formed from the community colleges operated by the University of Kentucky, and the technical colleges operated by the Cabinet for Workforce Development. The restructuring met considerable political opposition, but most observers see it as key to meeting the state's aggressive new enrollment goals.

The education reform package also created a new and strengthened coordinating board, the Council on Postsecondary Education. That council has initiated a number of statewide priorities: the "Bucks for Brains" program to attract world-class researchers, a rural economic development program, an expanded adult literacy program, and one of the most ambitious virtual university initiatives in the country. (See "Kentucky Virtual University and Kentucky Virtual Library," facing page.) The result has been a renewed sense of commitment and possibility in a state where the phrase "Education Pays" is displayed on billboards everywhere.

"A governor who sets his goals beyond the limit of his term is a rare bird."

Gordon Davies, council president from 1998 to 2002, took on the challenge of putting policies and programs behind the governor's vision. "I have worked in American higher education for over 30 years," Davies says. "I can tell you that a governor who sets his goals beyond the limit of his term is a rare bird.... When [Patton] said if we achieve our objectives by 2020, we would reap the benefits by 2040, I was astonished."

Davies and his new council members deserve much of the credit for changing state approaches to investment and priority setting. More important, the language used in the state to talk about higher education's obligations has changed. In a speech in 2001, Davies posed a simple—and fundamental—question to the higher education community: "Can we succeed in higher education while the citizens of Kentucky fail? Can we be a 'castle in a bog' of poverty and poor health?" The council has developed five questions to help it move its public agenda forward:

- Are more Kentuckians ready for college?
- Are more students enrolling?
- Are more students advancing through the system?
- Are we preparing Kentuckians for life and work?
- Are Kentucky's communities and economy benefiting?

In a September 2001 address to the trustees, Davies reiterated the board's themes:

> "We have one mission—to improve lives. We are working to help women, men, and children become healthier in the broadest sense. We are working to build stronger communities and a more robust economy.... The best way to predict the future is to create it. That's what we're doing together: creating the future."

Before his departure in 2002, Davies reported on progress toward reform. Among the successes he cited increased enrollment, particularly in adult education and literacy, and substantial strengthening of university research.

Kentucky Virtual University and Kentucky Virtual Library

With an annual budget approaching $7 million, these two interrelated entities are among the larger and better-financed "virtual" initiatives in the nation. KYVU's mission is to coordinate and facilitate educational access, while KVL provides online access to library materials and databases for all the students and citizens of the state. Their joint goal is "to make postsecondary education more accessible, efficient, and responsive to Kentucky's citizens and businesses."

Since its inception in 1998, KYVU has grown to offer more than 500 courses online, as well as 48 complete programs. It is not a degree-granting institution: students register and receive credit from one of the 28 participating institutions (including one out-of-state institution, the University of Baltimore).

The 5,000 students in KYVU programs are 68 percent female; and more than 50 percent of them are older than traditional students. Some 58 percent of them are enrolled in community colleges, while only one percent study under the aegis of the University of Kentucky.

The KVL has also proved effective and efficient. It conducts more than 600,000 searches monthly and, according to the Council on Postsecondary Education, has saved the state's educational institutions more than $32 million in database acquisition costs.

For many small institutions, particularly community colleges, the services provided by KYVU and KVL are essential to developing and sustaining online programs. Among the offerings:

- A searchable Web site
- A 24-hour telephone call center to assist students with questions on enrollment and fees, as well as to provide technical support
- Online tutoring assistance, writing center, career planning, and book store
- A course-management system that supports faculty in developing courses and managing interaction
- A digital satellite channel for institutional use
- A central staff that provides support in instructional development and training in areas deemed critical to the state, such as adult literacy
- A leadership role in collaborative program development

Oregon: Be creative

The Oregon story is not the classic one of a powerful governor taking an inspiring vision and a thoughtful plan to the people, garnering political and financial support, and then implementing a statewide program to boost access and increase research for the economy. Instead, higher education and board members here have been masters of improvisation, turning adversity into opportunity.

That adversity began at the hands of the voters. Following a 1990 ballot initiative that placed severe limits on property taxes, funding for Oregon's K-12 schools was shifted to the state budget. That, of course, put enormous pressure on other parts of the budget, most notably higher education. While Oregon voters were not the first or only citizens to impose such measures, higher education's budget problems were exacerbated by tuition freezes imposed by the legislature.

In the face of those obstacles, and sometimes because of them, Oregon has developed some strikingly successful innovations. Its approach to deregulation, inspired by financial downturn, resulted in better service to more students at a lower cost to the state. More recently, its alliance with the high technology industry has become a successful model for business-university partnerships. And in the course of a tumultuous decade, Oregon's leaders have sought new answers to old questions about the public purpose of higher education, the appropriate balance between board control and university independence, and the role of trustees in political action and policymaking.

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The public's corporation

Faced with dismal prospects for state funding due to the ballot initiative and the recession of the early 1990s, Oregon University System Chancellor Joseph Cox made a bold proposal to the legislature. In late 1994, in preparation for the 1995 legislative

session, he promised the state that the university would enroll 2000 additional students at no additional cost to the general fund—if the university system were given substantial freedom to manage its own fiscal affairs. In effect, the proposal would liberate higher education from many of the regulations imposed by the Department of Administrative Services. The chancellor argued that the savings realized through more efficient operations and revenues from increased enrollment would compensate for lost state funding—funding that was unlikely in any event.

Some opponents to the chancellor's plan argued that such deregulation would inevitably lead to the misuse of public funds. Others complained that the system would exploit its newfound independence to slash wages, ignore affirmative action, and disregard minority and women vendors. But after a series of compromises, the system achieved substantial responsibility for its own labor relations (it had always controlled it own faculty personnel policies), for leasing, contracting for services and capital construction, and for purchasing. The system also willingly agreed to adhere to the state's prevailing social policies.

Another important component of reform was a significant change in the financing and budgeting system of the state higher education system. It moved from the restrictions of incremental funding to a more transparent system based on market responsiveness to enrollment changes.

"There has been a change in the culture of the institutions."

The results of those changes, according to the report of an independent review panel established in the legislation, are little short of spectacular. In addition to saving millions of dollars and enrolling the 2000 additional students, the universities met or exceeded all of the social policy goals. Perhaps a more far-reaching consequence has been the adjustment in attitude among university leaders. Bill Neland, chairman of the review panel, observed, "There has been a change in the culture of the institutions, with the emergence of an entrepreneurial focus on results rather than process."

Advocacy for all

With its population and economic activity centered in the Willamette Valley, much of the state remains sparsely populated—and thus has limited political clout. But by the mid-1990s demographic change was beginning to cause pressure on the governing board. How could the state meet the needs of growing areas—such as central Oregon, popular with retirees and high-tech entrepreneurs—when it could scarcely afford the institutions it has?

It thus fell to the board and its staff to advocate a broader vision for the university system's role in Oregon's economic and social life. Chancellor Cox says it is the system's job to advocate for the struggling rural areas of the state. The system's public responsibility is to function as a "parent of orphan issues," he believes. By sponsoring rural education centers and managing a statewide distance education program, the system, as Cox sees it, provides a balance that might be lost if all decisions were made on strict economic or political grounds.

The Oregon University System's public responsibility is to function as a "parent of orphan issues."

In 2001, the system took long-overdue action to increase higher education services in central Oregon by proposing a new branch university at Bend. Not until the system organized a competitive proposal process—won by Oregon State University—did the state's two flagship institutions show much interest in the area. While the process caused no small amount of conflict and pressure on the system board, the grateful citizens of central Oregon will be well served by the results.

A high technology-university alliance

Like the other innovations in Oregon, the remarkable partnership between the state's burgeoning high technology industries and the university system had unlikely origins. Governors of many other states insist on such an alliance, but in Oregon, Governor John Kitzhaber's priorities were elsewhere. And historical university links to economic development tended to be with forestry and agriculture, the traditional businesses of the state. One observer described the attitude of technology leaders toward the university system as "fierce anger" about higher education's lack of customer focus and indifference to the industry's needs.

What brought those seemingly disparate partners together, then? In 1999, facing a tight budget, system leaders began looking for assistance from the business community. The engineering deans at Oregon State and Portland State began an energetic outreach effort facilitated by Diane Vines, vice-chancellor of the university system, who has been credited for her contributions to the project's eventual success.

Spirited lobbying was a crucial component of the coalition's strategy. Both business and university spokespersons successfully showed how better university funding would provide a better economic future. The partners also found support in the Republican-controlled legislature, despite friction with the Democratic governor. In fact, at the end of the 1999 session, the legislature restored more than $100 million to the system budget in the Higher Education Efficiency Act.

Major budget reductions driven by state general fund shortfalls in the 2001-03 biennium—combined with record-breaking enrollments—brought a sense of *déjà vu*, bringing into question, once again, the ability of the system to achieve its goals. But adversity is nothing new to Oregon's higher education system, and its leaders are tackling the challenge head-on.

The presidents of the state's seven universities opened a July 2002 strategic planning effort by pushing for a bold redefinition of the relationship between the institutions, the system, and the state. The presidents urged the State Board of Higher Education to work with them and state policymakers to authorize each university to set its own tuition; raise and spend non-state revenue with greater autonomy; and have full authority in purchasing, contracting, technology, property management, and personnel decisions—among other recommendations. In exchange for greater autonomy, each university would agree to meet certain state goals. Finally, to "oversee these responsibilities at the local level," the presidents proposed, "each institution should be able to establish its own board of trustees to meet its specific needs," while the system board would continue to set statewide policy, as well as providing advocacy and support.

How the state's leaders—including a new chancellor and board chair, a new governor, and a new generation of state legislators—address these provocative proposals is certain to break new ground in refining and implementing Oregon's public agenda.

Texas: Be inclusive

More than one out of every eight Americans lives in Texas. The state's population is currently 21 million, and has grown 10 percent the last ten years. Hispanics now make up 32 percent of the population. The 140 public and independent colleges and universities in Texas enroll just short of one million students. Home to two premier public research universities, Texas also has a commitment to open-door access to four-year colleges, and to a highly regarded community college system.

While the state has always boasted of its educational accomplishments, a number of factors in the late 1990s led to an unwelcome vision of the future. A report by state demographer Steve Murdock of Texas A&M University was especially grim. If current economic and demographic trends continued, he noted, Texas would have an unskilled and undereducated population not able to perform successfully in a technology-based society. He also projected substantially more spending on prisons, welfare, and Medicaid, and pointed out the likelihood of significant declines in the average household income of the state in the years ahead.

Members of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board asked why they were looking at proposals for new doctoral programs when the state had much bigger problems.

Those dire projections coincided with the consequences of the U.S. 5th Circuit Court of Appeals' decision in the *Hopwood* case. That *Hopwood* ruling, as interpreted by the Texas Attorney General, forbade the use of race and ethnicity in admission and financial aid decisions. Fortunately, the debate about *Hopwood* revolved not only around how to ensure minority access to selective institutions (as it had in California), but how to increase the numbers of students attending an essentially open-door system as well.

Simultaneously, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board was undergoing important changes. Its new staff leadership—Don Brown, commissioner of higher education, and Pam Willeford, board chair—was seeking to emphasize strategic planning over regulation.

"It was one of those moments of revelation," recalls Deputy Commissioner Teri Flack. "We were holding a retreat in March 1999 to review the many proposals for new doctoral programs before the board. And members of the board asked why we were looking at that issue when the state had much bigger problems."

Higher education leaders have shaped an ambitious new strategy for the state to add 500,000 new students to the system by 2015.

Seizing their opportunity, Willeford and Brown shaped an ambitious new strategy for the state. The resulting plan, "Closing the Gaps by 2015," took about 18 months to develop, and was reviewed by more than 3,000 individuals. The planning process, led by Martin Basaldua, vice-chair of the board, identified goals that would be of greatest value to Texas. Adopted by the board in October 2000, the plan proposes adding 500,000 new students to the system by 2015, 300,000 more than normal-growth projections would indicate. It also promises to increase by 50 percent the number of degrees and certificates awarded. (Two other goals relate to program excellence and increased research.) All the goals are concrete and simply expressed, and have 5, 10, and 15-year targets, including specific increases in minority enrollment. The plan also identifies numerous strategies for accomplishing each of the goals, all of which have the full endorsement of the governing boards and chief executives of the university systems and institutions of Texas.

In addition, Brown says, public and political response to the board's goals has been overwhelmingly positive. "Closing the Gaps by 2015" was reinforced by Governor Rick Perry's Commission on 21st Century Colleges and Universities, a 17-member panel he appointed in 1999 to develop an ambitious agenda for higher education in preparation for the 2001 legislative session. In early 2001, the commission endorsed "Closing the Gaps by 2015" and specifically recommended other major strategies, including expansion of the TEXAS Grant Program; establishing a college preparatory curriculum as the standard curriculum in high school; and developing a statewide higher education awareness and motivational campaign. By May 2001, the legislature had passed a package of bills to implement those recommendations.

"The most critical element of our reform agenda is the TEXAS Grant Program," claims Brown. "Regardless of grades, students who have taken a college preparatory curriculum in high school, and demonstrate financial need, will have free access to one of our state's institutions." The program, combined with an aggressive statewide higher education awareness and motivational campaign to begin in August 2002, will help enroll the 300,000 "missing" students in the system.

School reform is essential to meeting that goal, of course. Those new students will be found, for the most part, in the state's K-12 system, and currently only 40 percent of the state's high school students are enrolling in college-prep courses. To change that situation, the legislature, led by Teel Bivins, chair of the Senate Education Committee, passed a bill in 2001 that essentially makes a college preparatory curriculum the standard in the state's high schools. The Coordinating Board expects the number of students taking college preparatory courses to increase dramatically as a result of both the new legislation and the offer of free tuition through the TEXAS Grant Program.

Some problems no doubt lie ahead. There are concerns because the coordinating board was silent on new enrollment funding—although Brown does believe that the state will fund the program if it is successful. (Additional student aid does not represent "new" dollars at most institutions.) And the state's 50 community college districts will bear much of the burden of recruiting and retaining the additional students, in addition to their new responsibilities for training teachers. . But in 2001 the state demonstrated its commitment to the goals of the plan by significantly increasing the size and scope of the TEXAS Grant Program and putting $5 million into the public awareness campaign.

The eyes of the nation will undoubtedly be upon Texas to see if such bold new initiatives will enroll 300,000 more of its citizens than would otherwise be in college. If so, the state will achieve participation rates comparable to those of the country's other most-populous states.

What to do

Governing boards must understand that a public agenda is a pursuit—not an achievement. It will not be completed with a new reorganization or piece of legislation. It will continue to challenge and confuse higher education leaders and trustees as the world changes, and our ability to cope with that change remains imperfect.

After reviewing the successes and shortcomings of the past decade and looking to the future, higher education boards will need to adjust some of their headings. Higher education has been quite responsive to the nation's shift to a more global economic environment. While that issue will remain important, we believe it needs a new approach. In a time when free-market economics so completely dominates policy, it may now be higher education's job to more carefully examine the gaps and shortcomings in market responses, to purposefully try to redress inequities.

That is especially true in regard to many public-service pursuits where financial incentives do not attract students in large-enough numbers or support necessary research. Whether efforts to increase the teacher supply will be enough to overcome the lack of external incentives is questionable. In the areas of public health, safety, and the environment we also may be severely challenged in the years ahead to respond to public need. To increase access to higher education, we will have to meet a rising standard. In fact, all our efforts to enroll, educate, and move students to higher levels of achievement are constantly being held to ever-higher benchmarks.

A public agenda is a pursuit— not an achievement.

Of course, it is not higher education's job to simply respond to the public. It must bring to political leaders and the public at-large those educational needs and goals that may bring fewer immediately obvious economic benefits. Support for the arts, for the value of a liberal education, for greater commitment to the developing world, and for solutions to pressing environmental problems may require more persuasion, for example, but remain no less important to our broader social purposes.

Next steps

During our preparation of this report, several state and systems leaders suggested concrete steps for initiating a public agenda. Their advice follows.

Hire the right leader. Because a reform effort is apt to take longer than its initiator will hold office, boards hold a responsibility to maintain momentum. Only careful succession planning will ensure that new leaders will bring new energy and skills to your efforts. Board members should therefore seek out those who appreciate higher education's values and culture, and who display the political acumen and verve to bring about change.

Build your case. Demonstrate the negative economic and social consequences of "standing still." Encourage your state to compete on a national level, not merely to attempt to best its own past performance. Tie a higher education system that provides access, training, and research opportunities to a brighter economic future for your state.

Raise expectations. Many underachieving states face not a shortage of funds but a shortage of aspirations. Some political, business, and institutional leaders are weary and cynical, unable to imagine their states first in anything. Rekindle their inherent optimism.

New alliances should be collaborative and mutually beneficial—not merely political.

Find partners. No matter how important your commitment or sincere your desire, you alone cannot set a public agenda for your state. Gubernatorial leadership is a blessing, but you must also find important allies in your legislature and your business community. Make sure you get influential faculty members on board; their international research networks and expertise will be invaluable to your efforts. Such new alliances should be collaborative and mutually beneficial—not merely political.

Move quickly but educate for the long term. The window for significant constitutional or legislative change is always narrow—one or two legislative sessions at best. But the change process is long. Kentucky accomplished much of its structural reform in a single legislative session in 1997, but the governor and the postsecondary council talked about a vision for the year 2020.

Match your initiatives to your state's real needs. Higher education administrators and faculty members believe fervently that their work contributes to the greater social good. Sometimes it does, and sometimes it doesn't. The job of the state board is

to be a window to the outside world. If that world suggests that student preparation in high school and functional illiteracy among adults is holding back the progress of the state, then match your programs to meet those needs, not some unrelated elitist aspiration of institutions.

Move public communications and marketing to the top of your agenda. Persuasion is much more effective than regulation, particularly in a time of reform. Make sure the citizens of your state know what you are attempting—and why. Your communications strategy should aim to spread the word to every citizen, in every socio-economic stratum.

Make sure the citizens of your state know what you are attempting—and why.

Report results. The public and its elected officials deserve periodic reports on your progress. Be honest and straightforward. No one will expect boards to completely meet every goal, but everyone will want a full explanation of any failures—and what corrective measures you plan to take and why. It goes without saying, of course, that you should tout your successes to the sky.

The findings of our study, and the evidence from the cases, are persuasive. States can develop a public agenda for higher education, and trustees *can* and do make a difference. We do not suggest it will be easy. It will require many deliberate and difficult decisions, the hardest of which will be the determination that change is necessary. Neither will the job be without risk. But, as James Madison wrote:

> Why is the experiment...to be rejected merely because it may comprise what is new? Is it not the glory of the American people that whilst they have paid a decent regard to opinions of former times...they have not suffered a blind veneration for antiquity... They reared the fabrics of governments which have no equal on the face of the globe.

If board members take Madison's exhortation to heart, and if they follow the dictates of their own consciences, they will be able to vastly improve the lot of those colleges and universities to which they are accountable, and the lives and futures of their fellow citizens, for which they hold an inherent responsibility.

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Terrence J. MacTaggart joined the AGB Center for Public Higher Education Trusteeship and Governance as a senior fellow in September 2001, serving as a member of the Center's team facilitating the Mississippi Leadership Summit on Higher Education.

MacTaggart is currently a University of Maine System Research Professor, having previously served as the system's chancellor. He was formerly chancellor and professor of English in the Minnesota State University System, as well as chancellor of the University of Wisconsin, Superior. He held faculty and administrative positions at Metropolitan State University, in St. Paul, Saint Cloud State University of Minnesota, Webster University (St. Louis, Missouri), and the University of Alaska, Fairbanks. In 1996, he was a Fulbright Scholar in Thailand.

MacTaggart has published and spoken on higher education economics and strategic planning, with a particular emphasis on the relationship between higher education and state government. His books include *Seeking Excellence Through Independence: Liberating Colleges and Universities from Excessive Regulation* (Jossey-Bass, 1998), and *Restructuring Public Higher Education: What Works and What Doesn't in Reorganizing Government Systems* (Jossey-Bass, 1996). MacTaggart is a graduate of Canisius College in Buffalo, receiving his M.A. in English from Saint Louis University, an M.B.A. from Saint Cloud State University, and a Ph.D. in English from Saint Louis University.

James R. Mingle is an independent consultant in the field of higher education management and planning. In 2000, he retired as the executive director of the State Higher Education Executive Officers of which he was the founding director in 1984. Among his current duties, he serves as director of the Distance Learning Policy Laboratory of the Southern Regional Education Board and as a consultant to the Education Commission of the States. Over the years he has worked closely with state and system boards and served as a consultant and facilitator to AGB projects and seminars. Mingle was also a member of the founding board of MERLOT, a resource for online materials for faculty use. In 1995, he was a visiting fellow at Educom (now Educause), an association for higher education technology professionals.

Mingle's writing has covered a wide range of public policy issues at the state and federal level. His most recent work includes a comparative study of financing in the United States and the United Kingdom, a series of policy reports on distance learning, and evaluative studies for state and system boards. He is a graduate of the University of Akron and the University of Michigan, where he received his Ph.D.

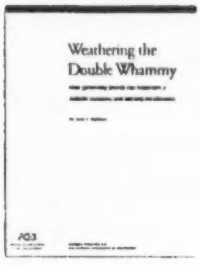
AGB and its Center for Public Higher Education Trusteeship and Governance:

centerforgovernance.net

centerforgovernance.net, AGB's electronic news bulletin, links higher education leaders and policymakers to the details that matter most on the governance and trusteeship issues that are already affecting institutions or communities like yours—or that could pop up in your state's legislature tomorrow.

From our *State Watch* feature—linking you to breaking developments across the nation—to our online issue briefs—quickly summarizing the key elements of topics ranging from creating effective trustee nominating committees to establishing a state matching fund program—to our online database, *centerforgovernance.net* provides you with up-to-the minute information on news and best practices in governance and trusteeship.

In addition, *centerforgovernance.net* is your electronic portal into AGB's comprehensive collection of information for trustees, presidents, and other higher education leaders—including the leaders of public college and university-related foundations. Visit *centerforgovernance.net* to download these recent AGB publications—and to learn more about AGB's portfolio of programs, publications, and services for public and independent institutions:



Weathering the Double Whammy: How governing boards can negotiate a volatile economy and shifting enrollments. Jane V. Wellman, a senior associate with The Institute for Higher Education Policy, identifies five steps boards—and policymakers—can take to diagnose and act on the short-term and long-term challenges facing public and private institutions and systems.

State Governance Action Report. An up-to-the minute account of recent and pending legislative, executive, and citizen action on governance, trusteeship, and institution-related foundations.

42

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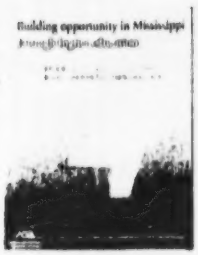

Building Opportunity in Mississippi through Higher Education. The AGB Center for Public Higher Education Trusteeship and Governance facilitated the recent Mississippi Leadership Summit on Higher Education. The summit's steering committee—co-chaired by Gov. Ronnie Musgrove and Mr. Aubrey Patterson, chairman and CEO of BancorpSouth—released this blueprint for educators and policymakers in January 2002.

Ideas into action

This year, AGB's National Conference on Trusteeship provided a forum for trustees and presidents to apply the findings in *Weathering the Double Whammy* to their own institutions and systems *(top photo)*. And in a variety of other settings—from customized on-campus programs for governing boards and institution-related foundation boards to the Center-facilitated Mississippi Leadership Summit on Higher Education *(lower photo)*—AGB has translated these good ideas for trusteeship and governance into good practice.

Double Whammy panel at AGB conference

Mississippi Gov. Ronnie Musgrove

Advisory Council

The Honorable Jim Edgar
Council Chair;
Distinguished Fellow, Institute of Government and Public Affairs, University of Illinois;
Former Governor, Illinois

Thomas J. Imeson
Council Vice Chair;
Principal, Goldschmidt Imeson;
Member, Oregon University System Board of Higher Education

A. Marshall Acuff, Jr.
Managing Director,
Salomon Smith Barney;
Trustee, Sweet Briar College

The Honorable Daniel T. Blue, Jr.
Member, North Carolina House of Representatives;
Trustee, Duke University

The Honorable Ronald R. Cowell
President, The Education Policy and Leadership Center;
Trustee, Community College of Allegheny County;
Former Member, Pennsylvania House of Representatives

J. Elizabeth Garraway
President, Maryland Independent College and University Association

Stanley O. Ikenberry
Regent Professor and President Emeritus, University of Illinois

Richard T. Ingram
President, Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges

Charles B. Knapp
Partner, Heidrick and Struggles;
Former President,
University of Georgia

Dale Ellen Leff
Member, Board of Directors,
Indiana University Foundation

The Honorable Zell Miller
U.S. Senator, Georgia

Donald C. Phelps
W. K. Kellogg Regent's Professor,
University of Texas at Austin;
Former Chancellor, Los Angeles Community College District

William T. Pound
Executive Director, National Conference of State Legislatures

Frank H. T. Rhodes
President Emeritus,
Cornell University

Ted Sanders
President,
Education Commission of the States

Daniel M. Sprague
Executive Director,
Council of State Governments

Kala M. Stroup
President, American Humanics, Inc.;
Former Commissioner of Higher Education, Missouri Coordinating Board for Higher Education

Claire A. Van Ummersen
Vice President and Director, Office of Women in Higher Education, American Council on Education

The Honorable Olene S. Walker
Lieutenant Governor, Utah

The Honorable Clifton R. Wharton
Former Chairman and CEO, TIAA-CREF;
Former Chancellor,
State University of New York;
Former President,
Michigan State University

Harold M. Williams
President Emeritus,
J. Paul Getty Trust;
Former Member, Board of Regents, University of California

Few institutions have a broad mission to address all issues of the public's agenda.

But collectively, institutions under the guidance of a university system or coordinating board with a statewide perspective--and with the critical input of business, government, and civic leaders--can focus educational programs to address economic and social issues through a distinctive public agenda for higher education.

The task is difficult--given limited resources and inherent risks. But many boards are tackling it successfully, using communication, teaching, research, and partnerships to promote the common weal of a state and its citizens.

AGB

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